

17th and 18th Century European Society and Popular Culture



Population trends

- Population of Europe went through major demographic shifts during the 16th century.
- Population rose slowly due to high death rates (only 50% of children reached adulthood).
- Thirty Years War killed over 5 million.
- Famine and plague were reoccurring through mid-century.
- Little Ice Age in late 16th delayed marriage and childbirth

European Population

European Population Data (in millions)

Year	1550	1575	1600	1625	1650	1675	1700
England	3		4	4.5		5.8	5.8
France		20					19.3
Italy	11	13	13	13	12	11.5	12.5
Russia	9		11	8	9.5	13	16
Spain	6.3		7.6		5.2		7
All Europe	85	95	100	100	80	90	100

Social Status

- Social status was depended on birth (nobility), education (professionals), and wealth (merchants)
- Wealth was gaining larger status due to the growing middle class-bankers/merchants and their ability to use their wealth to gain political power
- Limited social mobility was possible mainly due to wealth.

New middle and upper middle classes

- *Describe these new classes*
- Gentry in England
- Nobles of the Robe in France
- Caballeros and hidalgos in Spain
- Town elites-bankers and merchants

Status of Women

- At all levels women were subordinate to legal system (legal cases for rape had to be brought to court by a man)
- Most women were denied the right to own property or run a business
- However, women were making strides by owning and operating more businesses and trades than they had previously.
- *What were these businesses and trades that they owned?*

Women's roles

Find examples of real European women in these roles: (In French-the women question called-Les Querelles des Femmes)

- **Educated women/intellectuals**
- **Women preachers**
- **Women business owners**

Peasants

- Increased wealth did not help the plight of peasants.
- Increased taxes and inflation hurt them the most.
- Famine, plague and war hit this segment of society the hardest.
- Only relief came from enlistment in an army or moving to a city, each had its own hardships



Crime and Punishment

- Crime was the only alternative for many of the poor.
- In a age before modern police forces, crime became a major urban concern.
- Punishment was severe; torture was acceptable.

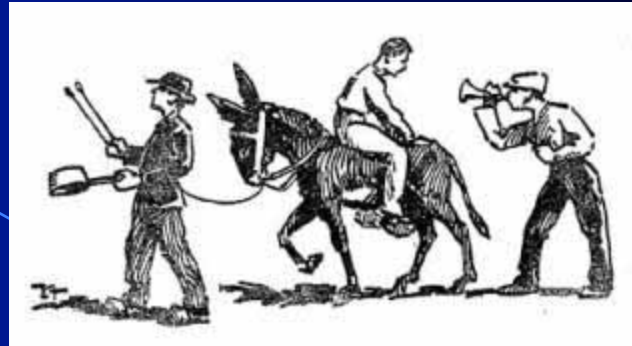


Crime and Punishment

Look up the following forms of punishment and humiliation enforced by local and church authorities:

- Charivari
- Stocks
- Public whipping and branding

Charivari



- During times of trouble, rituals and holidays brought reassurance to the people.
- Practices like *charivari* or “rough music” were an outlet for the fears and frustrations of the people.
- Through role-playing a “world turned upside-down,” the community expresses solidarity in hard times.

Life in the Villages

- Village life was changing with large numbers of peasants moving to cities, the growing wealth of some over others, and the intrusion of central governments.
- Local lords (who had often defended villagers rights) began to look more and more to the opportunities given at the royal court.

Life in the Villages

*Look up these leisure activities and rituals
and describe them*

- Saint's day activities
- Carnival
- Blood sports

Life in the Villages

How did the commercialization of agriculture affect villagers:

- Enclosure movement in 16th-17th c
- Restricted use of village commons
- Free hold tenure

Life in Cities

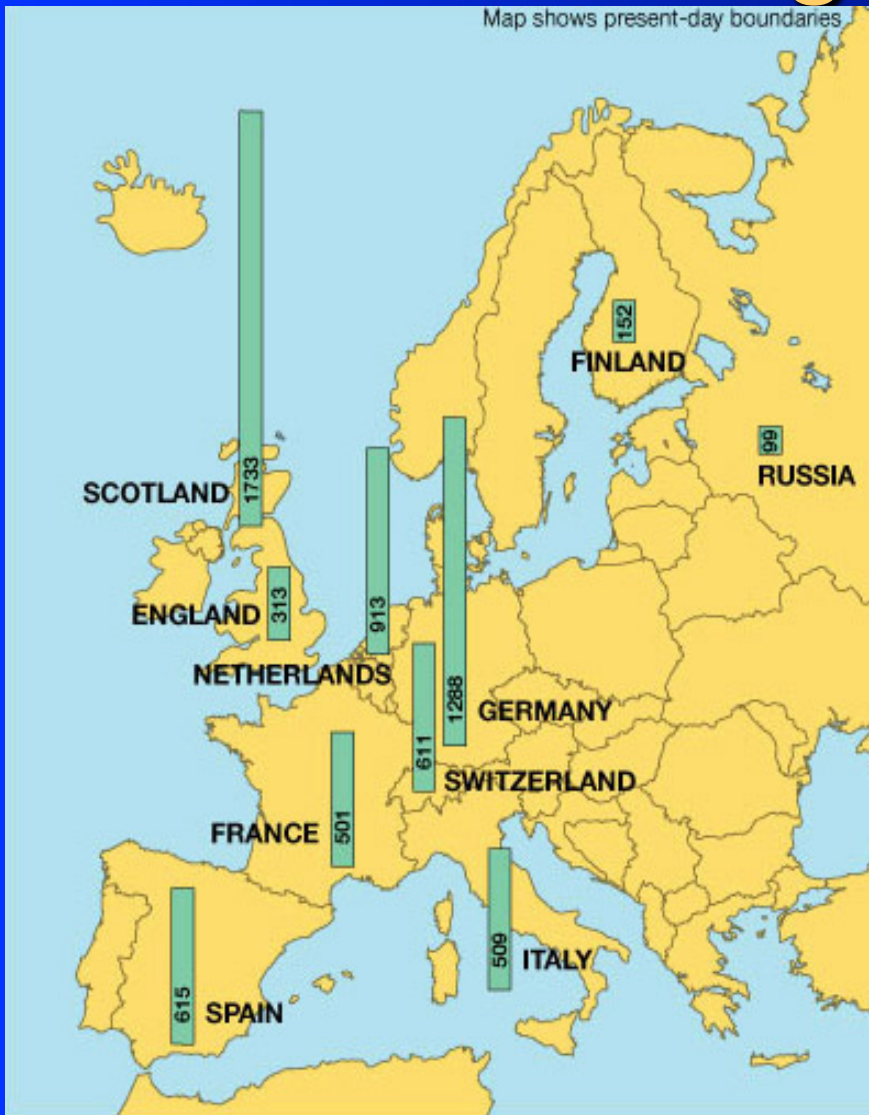
- Urban life was fragmented, disorganized, and un-personal.
- Cities offered the opportunity to be employed in a trade or new merchant-based opportunity.
- Literacy levels in the cities were much higher than in rural areas, leading to the rise in newspapers and books.

Life in Cities

Describe how these challenges were dealt with by cities:

- Sanitation because of overpopulation
- Employment of peoples
- Poverty Crime

Belief in Magic and Witchcraft



- In this age of chaos, magic and unknown mystical forces had a strong pull on people's lives.
- Witchcraft was strongly blamed and persecuted.
- “Great Witch Craze” swept Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- These began to subside at the end of the 17th century.

Witchcraft in Europe

- Find 5 examples of true Witchcraft trials and punishments during this time period
- Include effects on society/families

Conclusion

- Despite the difficult and turbulent times of the early and middle 17th century, most Europeans had reason to hope for better things by century's end
- Population was on the rebound; science was conquering the natural world; stable and powerful national governments were in place.
- Despite this, the problems poverty and dislocation for the majority of Europe's peasants would continue into the next century.